

Moreton succeeded a Richard, who lived in the time of Edward II., and to him John, after whom came two Ralphs. Sir Richard de Moreton was living in 1449, and was succeeded by Ralph and William. Those were turbulent times, and the Moretons appear to have been concerned in civil broil, for neighbour was often against neighbour in the Wars of the Roses.

William Moreton, who lived in the days of Henry VII. and his successor, and who married the daughter of Sir Andrew Brereton of Brereton, was a squire who valued himself, and appears to have had much consideration amongst his neighbours. He had a dispute as to his right of precedence with Thomas Rode of Rode, which took a singular turn. It came before George Bromley, Lieutenant Justice of Chester, with whom was associated in arbitration Sir William Brereton, but the man of law left the decision to the Cheshire Knight. The dispute between Moreton and Rode was as to "which shuld sit highest in the churche, and foremost goo in procession." Brereton, therefore, to settle this weighty matter, called to him "xii of the most auncyent men inhabiting within the parish of Astlebery," and equitably and cautiously gave the step of local honour to the disputant "that may dispende in landes, by title of enheritaunce, 10 mark or above more than the other."

What a picture does this give us of the state of local feeling—arising, we may be sure, from earlier embitterment—in the time when the proud house of Moreton was raised, though whether it was actually built by this owner or

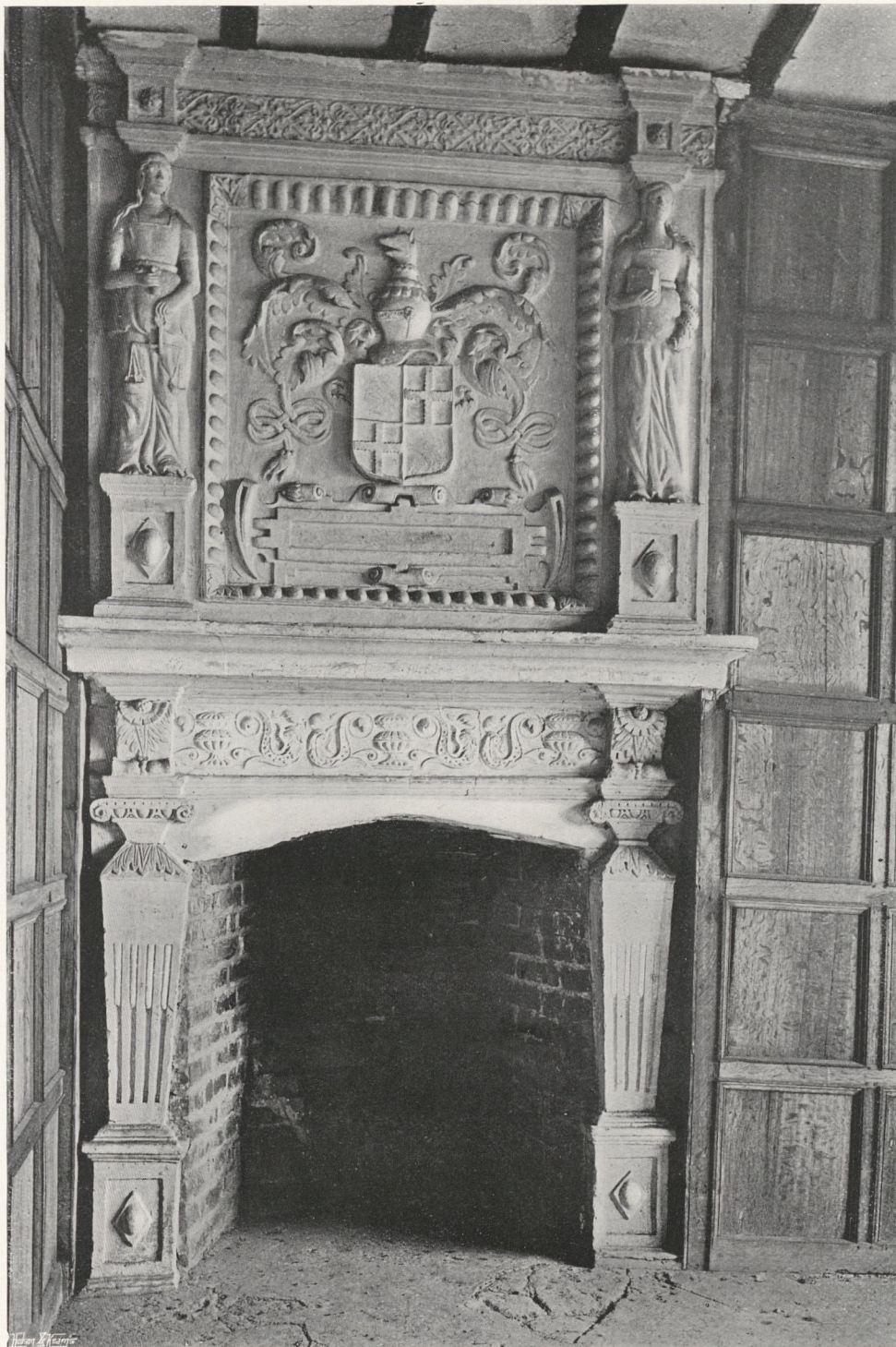
by his son, Sir William Moreton, who died early in Elizabeth's reign, we are not quite sure. Both of them had a hand in it, and we may surmise that some of the work of their ancestors is embodied in the structure. Certainly there had been a house on the site before, and there are mounds within and without the moat which seem to show that it had been castellated, or at least had had the resource of strong towers, to which the inhabitants, in the extremity of siege,

could fly. "God is Al in Al Thing; This Windows whire made by William Moreton in the yeare of oure Lorde M.D.LIX."

"Richard Dale, carpe'der made thies windovs by the grac' of God." Such are the inscriptions upon two of the magnificent bays in the courtyard. All honour, then, to William Moreton, the liberal owner, and to Richard Dale, the splendid craftsman, who laboured and wrought so skilfully and so well.

The old mansion is moated, like most of the houses of the date in Lancashire and Cheshire, and the buildings surround three sides of a quadrangle, which originally

was completely enclosed. The approach is now by a stone bridge spanning the moat on the south side, but before reaching it the visitor has satisfied his eye with a view of the extremely beautiful and attractive character of the exterior. The admirable effect of the rich and varied timber-work, the quaintness of the overhanging storeys, and the elaboration of the carved barge-boards and windows, is extremely fine. The character of the carving and its very interesting details are seen in the picture taken from the bridge,



CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE RETIRING ROOM.